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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 004072

SIPDIS

STATE FOR E, EB, NEA/NGA, EUR/SE

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TAGS: PREL MARR MOPS PTER ASEC TU IZ

SUBJECT: KURDISH GROUPS' UNILATERAL ACTIONS CONTINUE TO
OBSTRUCT FLOW OF ASSISTANCE AND TRADE TO IRAQ

REF: A) ANKARA 3922 B) ANKARA 3794 C) ANKARA 3731

¶1. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.

¶2. (C) Summary and action request: Reftels report the KDP's practice of charging taxes/fees for goods crossing the Turkish-Iraqi border. Reports from GOT officials, local businessmen, and UN officials indicate that the KDP continues to charge fees for certain goods and vehicles. UN and MFA officials also complain of long delays on the Iraqi side of the border. This situation is disrupting the flow of assistance to Iraq and hampering our overall reconstruction efforts. Ref A recommends that the USG devise (with the KDP if necessary) a more equitable, transparent system for processing the movement of people and goods to/from Iraq. Post looks forward to Department's guidance on this issue. End summary and action request.

KDP Still Charging Fees, Reports of Delays at Border

¶3. (C) Reports from GOT officials, local businessmen, and UN officials indicate that the KDP continues to charge fees for certain goods and vehicles crossing the Turkish-Iraqi border (reftels). U.N. World Food Program (WFP) Ankara representative David Schaad told us June 25 that the KDP was still charging the WFP \$20/truck. Schaad said he was also concerned about the long wait at the border (which he claimed was up to 25 km of trucks on either side of the border), which he attributed mainly to bottlenecks on the Iraqi side. Schaad noted, however, that the GOT was also slowing traffic by meticulously checking incoming trucks to ensure they were not smuggling cheap fuel into Turkey. Schaad also complained that the Iraqi side was giving priority to U.S. contractors' trucks, which further delayed WFP trucks. Alp Ay of the MFA's Multilateral Political Organizations office also told us June 25 the border was congested primarily due to technical and administrative bottlenecks on the Iraqi side.

¶4. (C) An official from USG military contractor Kellogg, Brown, and Root (KBR) told us June 25 that the KDP had stopped charging KBR trucks several weeks ago; however, he said, he had heard that other vehicles entering Iraq from Turkey were still routinely being charged taxes/fees. (Note: as reported ref C, local KDP rep Safeen Dizayee told us June 9 that the KDP would exempt U.S. military and UN shipments.) The Vice President of Delta Petroleum, a private Turkish company engaging in barter trade with SOMO (septel), told us June 25 that the KDP had not charged the Delta trucks entering Iraq with benzine and LPG. However, the Delta official said, he had just learned that Delta trucks attempting to enter Turkey with Iraqi fuel oil were being charged a USD 120 per truck "export tax" by the KDP. Delta's trucks were currently stuck at the border while the company decided what to do about this tax.

Security Concerns Increasing for Truckers

¶5. (C) The WFP and KBR officials with whom we spoke complained that the security situation in Iraq was deteriorating, particularly near and to the south of Baghdad. WFP's Schaad said that security concerns were deterring Turkish truckers from driving WFP supplies south of Baghdad; the KBR official said he was also having trouble getting truckers to go near or to the south of Baghdad, adding that his trucks were routinely returning from Iraq with bullet holes, and one of his drivers had recently been shot (but appeared to be recovering).

Action Request

16. (C) The KDP's continued practice of charging a range of taxes/fees for goods crossing the Turkish-Iraqi border is disrupting the flow of assistance to Iraq and hampering our overall reconstruction efforts. Post will continue to press the GOT to reduce all unnecessary obstacles to the flow across its border to facilitate fully the two-way trade. On the Iraqi side, we reiterate the recommendation in Ref A: that the USG devise (with the KDP if necessary) a more equitable, transparent system for processing the movement of people and goods to/from Iraq. Post looks forward to early Department guidance on this issue.

PEARSON